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Chairman: Mr. Niculescu ..... (Romania)

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00-69888 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 95: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/55/95, A/55/99-E/2000/86 and A/55/357)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (*continued*) (A/55/25, A/55/78-E/2000/56, A/55/94, A/55/120 and A/55/447)

1. **Mr. Akasaka** (Japan) said that the meeting to be held in two years' time (Rio+10) to review the implementation of the measures proposed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, would provide an opportunity to review the implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes in order to identify areas in which further efforts were needed.

2. Japan was mindful of the problems facing developing countries and of the need to assist them in their capacity-building efforts in the field of the environment. The Government of Japan, which had taken a series of measures to help developing countries, such as the Initiative for Sustainable Development and the Kyoto Initiative, would continue to fulfil its commitment to providing such assistance. Indeed, in 1998 about $3.2 billion, one quarter of Japan's total official development assistance to developing countries, had gone to projects relating to the preservation and improvement of the environment.

3. Japan considered that there were several issues that merited deliberation at Rio+10 and during the preparatory process. First, there was a need for a comprehensive review of progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21 since its adoption, since rapid changes had taken place, new environmental problems had emerged and the pace of globalization had accelerated during that period. It was essential to develop new policies that addressed current and future environmental conditions, the rapid changes in the socio-economic situation and the effects of globalization. Second, it was important to promote synergies and coordination among activities stemming from environment-related conventions and protocols with a view to reducing duplication of activities, strengthening ongoing activities and encouraging international cooperation. Third, Japan believed that a group of experts should be established and a meeting of eminent persons convened as part of the preparatory process. The involvement not only of Governments but also of business and industry, non-governmental organizations, the scientific community and other major groups from all the regions of the world was crucial to success. It was necessary to build up political momentum so that Rio+10 would not be just another international conference.

4. Japan earnestly hoped that Rio+10 would be held in Asia, where 60 per cent of the world's population lived and which was currently faced with serious environmental problems: a substantial proportion of its land mass was exposed to drought; air pollution was acute; carbon dioxide emissions, the major cause of global warming, were growing at an accelerated pace, and the conservation of biological diversity was urgently required. Japan believed that holding the meeting in Asia would have an inspiring influence on the pursuit of lasting solutions to those environmental problems and that those solutions might well be replicated in other parts of the world.

5. At the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in September in Kita-Kyūshū (Japan), participants had adopted the Ministerial Declaration and the Regional Message to Rio+10, in which, recognizing the importance of raising awareness of global issues, they had stressed their conviction that the holding of Rio+10 in the region would help to realize sustainable development in that region and beyond. They had fully supported the holding of the meeting in Indonesia in response to the generous offer of the Government of that country. Japan, for its part, was ready to provide full support for the preparation of the conference.

6. **Ms. Bose** (India) associated herself with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and said that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 had launched a worldwide initiative for sustainable development and the environment based on the understanding that the fundamental needs of developing countries must be met. It had been recognized that the overriding priorities for developing countries, economic growth and poverty eradication, required substantial resources, which meant that they were unable to generate sufficient domestic resources for dealing with environmental concerns. Without assistance from the international community, the

developing countries would be unable to meet the environmental objectives of Agenda 21 unless they neglected their own development activities. In the circumstances, the Rio Conference had forged a balance between developmental and environmental imperatives and created a framework for assistance from the international community to complement and support the efforts of the developing countries to achieve sustainable development. It was to be achieved through the transfer of new and additional resources and environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on concessional and preferential terms, in order to meet at least the incremental costs involved in fulfilling environmental obligations.

7. Although the developing countries had made commendable efforts towards implementation of Agenda 21 in an exceptionally difficult global environment, the promised resources and technologies from developed countries had failed to materialize. The "Rio+5" "Earth Summit" of the United Nations General Assembly in 1997 had acknowledged that the industrialized countries had failed to meet the international commitments they had entered into voluntarily in Agenda 21 to either assist developing countries or meet their own obligations under the common but differentiated and polluter pays principles, in view of their history of industrialization and technology choices as well as unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. Unfortunately, many of the tasks undertaken by the international community at the Earth Summit remained largely unfulfilled and sustained development of the developing countries remained a distant goal while the planet's resources were being rapidly depleted.

8. Preparations for the ten-year review of Agenda 21 had begun against the backdrop of the disappointing performance of the preceding eight years. It was, however, encouraging that the Millennium Declaration had reaffirmed the principles of sustainable development as set out in Agenda 21 and urged that no effort be spared to free mankind from the threat of living on a planet irreversibly damaged by human activity. Her delegation would endeavour to make a constructive contribution to the General Assembly proceedings and the preparatory process for the ten-year review in order to ensure satisfactory outcomes.

9. The 10-year review would provide an opportunity to renew political commitment to sustainable development, evaluate progress in implementation of Agenda 21 and identify the constraints hampering effective implementation. Efforts should be aimed at action-oriented outcomes that would establish mechanisms to make available to developing countries, within a clearly defined time frame, financial resources and environmentally sound technologies so that they could leapfrog stages of development. Agenda 21 continued to provide a solid and vital basis for addressing the dual objectives of development and environment and must be fully implemented, rather than renegotiated.

10. The review process should be open-ended, transparent and participatory and she therefore supported the decision taken at the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) that at its tenth session it would become an open-ended preparatory committee for the coordination and integration of contributions to the review process. She stressed the need for high-quality preparations and for contributions and reports prepared as a result of consultations to be made available in a timely manner.

11. She welcomed the consensus that the review conference should be held in a developing country and looked forward to discussions and a final decision during the current session of the General Assembly on the timing and venue, as well as other organizational and procedural matters to facilitate early preparations.

12. The sincerity of the international community's commitment to the ten-year review would best be demonstrated if, in the time remaining before the conference, the developed countries took some concrete steps toward fulfilling their commitments under Agenda 21.

13. **Mr. Thakur** (Nepal) said that in the wake of the Rio Earth Summit there was a growing awareness of the interrelationship between sustainable development and environmental preservation. Unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and a still growing population of more than 6 billion persons had led to a point where the future of the planet itself was at stake. Depletion of finite resources and erosion of the ecological balance could leave the children of the world with a planet incapable of sustaining human life. Environmental concerns were certainly real and affected every human being. Environmental problems recognized no national boundaries and must therefore be addressed in their proper perspective and on the basis of greater cooperation at the regional and international levels.

14. Eight years had passed since the Earth Summit and the adoption of Agenda 21 and the Rio programme of action. During that time some progress had been made in implementing the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in particular with regard to institutional development and consensus-building. Apart from that, however, the Rio commitments remained largely unimplemented. Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption in the rich countries had caused serious damage to the environment. Poverty had increased in the poor countries as had pressure on natural resources and the environment. The international community must rise to the challenge of preserving its shared environment through concerted action.

15. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative on the ten-year review process and wished to stress that Agenda 21 should not be the subject of negotiation. In a world in which half the population was living on two dollars or less a day, and one fifth was living on less than one dollar a day, poverty eradication was the only credible basis for sustainable development in developing countries; the global community should therefore make poverty eradication the highest priority. In that respect, his delegation commended the Millennium Declaration of Heads of State and Government which set the goal of halving world poverty by 2015 and ensuring that the Kyoto Protocol entered into force before the tenth anniversary of the Earth Summit. The Millennium Declaration must now be translated into concrete and viable goals which would make a difference in people's lives.

16. Nepal, a land of fragile mountains and burgeoning population, had always been supportive of environmental protection and sustainable development. Ecological preservation had been a national priority from well before the Earth Summit and there had been renewed emphasis on it since the Summit. Nepal's national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, afforestation programmes, watershed conservation programmes and other activities were some examples of the ongoing efforts to preserve the environment and to promote sustainable development. Nepal was a party to a number of global instruments on environmental protection and had established a separate ministry to lend further momentum to those activities and sustain them. An environmental impact assessment was mandatory for all development projects, and his Government had encouraged all industrial units to set up effluent treatment plants by providing tax and other benefits.

17. Environmental protection and sustainable development called for a three-pronged strategy. First, all countries — especially the rich countries which produced and consumed more — must do everything possible to avoid unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. Second, all countries must display stronger political will and greater commitment to implement Agenda 21, the Kyoto Protocol and other compacts to preserve the environment and promote sustainable development. Third, those countries which had the resources and technology to make a difference must show a stronger resolve to help those which could not afford those costs. Without substantially enhanced financial, technical and technological support from the advanced countries, the developing countries would not be able to make much progress.

18. **Mr. Gamaleldin** (Egypt) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It welcomed the measures taken by the United Nations to prepare for the ten-year review to be held in 2002, which would be an opportunity to consider in depth the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21, adopted at the Earth Summit in 1992; in particular, it commended the report entitled "Global Environment Outlook 2000", issued by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which stated that the continued poverty of the majority of the planet's inhabitants and excessive consumption by the minority were the two major causes of environmental degradation.

19. Egypt believed that the objective of the ten-year review should be to achieve sustainable development for all countries within the framework of genuine cooperation between the North and the South. At the 2002 event, there should be no re-negotiation of Agenda 21; instead, the principles and the specific commitments which had been made should be reaffirmed so as to strengthen the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. To that end, the developed countries needed to help the developing countries obtain the necessary financing and to transfer environmentally sound technologies to them. The developing countries would also have to be helped in the area of institutional capacity-building so that they could achieve sustainable development. For its part, Egypt reiterated that Agenda 21 must serve as a

framework for dealing with new situations which had arisen since 1992.

20. His delegation welcomed the recommendation adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its eighth session, that its meetings at its tenth session should be transformed into an open-ended preparatory committee for the ten-year review. Egypt believed that the committee's work should be based on the outcome of the overall assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels, and that that assessment should include sectoral and intersectoral issues such as financing, transfer of technology, technical assistance for the institutional capacity-building, official development assistance, the solution of the debt problem and trade liberalization, within a time frame.

21. Egypt supported the establishment of the trust fund to finance the participation of representatives of developing countries in the preparatory activities of the ten-year review and at the event itself, and urged donor countries to contribute to the fund.

22. His delegation believed that the agenda of the ten-year review should concentrate on a limited number of items which should be considered in depth, and on the adoption of practical measures, with an indication of the source and amount of financing necessary for the implementation of those measures, and of who would be responsible for their application. It was not necessary to introduce new concepts in relation to sustainable development, but to apply the agreed principles and fulfil the commitments undertaken in 1992 and consider ways of developing institutional capacity in order to carry out activities related to the environment in the United Nations, including the future programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, bearing in mind the experience gained at the eighth session.

23. There was a need to win the confidence of the peoples with regard to the fulfilment of the commitments which had been undertaken at United Nations conferences and at the Millennium Summit, and the ten-year review provided an opportunity to do that.

24. His delegation welcomed the initiative of Tajikistan to proclaim the year 2003 the International Year of Fresh Water, since that would help raise the awareness of the international community about that very important resource. It also welcomed the decision to hold an informal meeting to consider the resolution to be submitted on the item, and hoped that that resolution would be adopted by consensus and that the views of all States would be taken into account. It was his delegation's understanding that, under decision SS.VI/2 on the activities of UNEP, which appeared in the report of the Governing Council on its sixth special session (A/55/25), water policy and strategy would be taken up at a meeting to be held on 6 November 2000 in order to take into account the views of all States on the formulation of the strategy. His delegation welcomed the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, a timely and forward-looking document which was a contribution to the efforts which were currently being made as part of the preparations for the ten-year review.

25. **Mr. Al-Hadid** (Jordan) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It believed that the environmental problems of the world were a result of the current phase of rapid growth, increased trade, and accelerated development and industrialization. The developing countries were not experiencing the environmental risks derived from the international transport and dumping of toxic wastes, although they were aware of the danger of the disposal of toxic solid waste, especially chemical and radioactive waste. The misuse of chemical pesticides and fertilizers in agriculture were another factor which contributed to the contamination of soil and underground water which, in turn, posed a risk to nature and to human beings. Institutional reform and the strengthening of technical capacity were essential for an integrated management of the environment which would help alleviate those dangers. The need for developing countries to acquire adequate technologies to enable them to conserve their natural environment and combat pollution must also be recognized. His delegation therefore urged that environmental measures should be formulated which focused on sustainable development, and were appropriate to the situation of openness and interdependence which characterized the modern world. It was necessary to facilitate the full implementation of all the conventions for the protection of the marine environment and the ozone layer. Flora and fauna were endangered and many species had already disappeared because of human activities. The necessary support must therefore be provided to developing countries so that they could combat desertification and drought.

26. The manufacture and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, involved a threat both for man and for the environment, especially because of the risks of radioactivity associated with nuclear weapons tests and the disposal of radioactive wastes. In those circumstances, in order to create a region free of weapons of mass destruction, his delegation urged the States of the Middle East to declare their stocks of such weapons, sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons without delay, subject their laboratories and research centres and their nuclear facilities to international inspection, and reveal the location of their deposits of radioactive waste and facilities for conducting nuclear tests, so as to eliminate the risks deriving from radioactivity.

27. **Mr. Seok-Young Choi** (Republic of Korea) said that since the landmark Rio Conference in 1992, the annual sessions of the Commission on Social Development had served to assess the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21. The ten-year review presented enormous challenges to the international community, since the commitments made 10 years earlier had fallen short of expectations, despite achievements in various fields. However, it should serve as a valuable opportunity to reinvigorate the spirit of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and fulfil the commitments made there.

28. The General Assembly, at its fifty-fifth session, was charged with the important task of deciding on the agenda, major themes, timing and venue of the ten-year review, together with issues relating to the preparatory process. The agenda and themes of the event should be focused, action-oriented and forward-looking in order to ensure a meaningful outcome and highlight the political significance of the event. The agenda could comprise sectoral issues such as water and energy — an issue which was not dealt with sufficiently in the environmental conventions — and cross-sectoral issues such as financial resources and the transfer of technology, including information and communication technologies.

29. The Republic of Korea suggested that the theme of the event should be "Global partnership to promote sustainable development in the era of globalization".

30. Although his delegation agreed with the time frame of the preparatory process as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Ensuring effective preparations for the ten-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the programme for the further implementation of Agenda 21" (A/55/120) and the need for input from the national and regional process, it was concerned about the time constraints for holding substantive sessions, since the first substantive session would not be held until early 2002, according to the preliminary schedule. His delegation therefore proposed that the Committee should consider holding the first substantive session later in 2001. It was also very important that the organizational session should be held in the following year; unless the session could provide concrete guidelines for the final event and the preparatory process, national and regional preparation in the latter half of 2001 might not produce satisfactory results. The venue of the ten-year review should be decided on as soon as possible so that all countries could prepare for the event in an adequate manner; he therefore called upon all the countries concerned to work closely to find an amicable solution. The Republic of Korea was considering the possibility of making a contribution to the trust fund for the ten-year review, once that fund was established, so as to help developing countries participate in the event.

31. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In an interdependent world, no country could live in a state of autarky, since all countries would be affected by climate change, the disappearance of plant and animal species, the degradation of the ozone layer and demographic growth; it was therefore urgent to apply remedies before the evils became endemic and took a tragic turn. In that sense, the new millennium would be decisive for the planet and humankind.

32. Thus, the principal environmental challenges were as follows: the rapid thinning of the ozone layer, the worrisome extinction of flora and fauna species, the increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which was causing global warming, the disappearance of forests and rapid world population growth. Eliminating those threats meant a fundamental restructuring of numerous elements of society; that, in turn, required the rich to reduce their consumption of natural resources so as to enable the poor to raise their standard of living.

33. In view of the magnitude of the changes required, there was a temptation to deny the gravity of the risks to the environment and make only a number of minor

adjustments. Nevertheless, radical change was possible if a sufficient number of people were mobilized who were prepared to act, since rebuilding a liveable world would require the efforts of all countries and their leaders.

34. The design and implementation of land planning and land management was a complex undertaking that required the participation of several national ministries, as well as regional, local and private-sector authorities, non-governmental organizations and development agencies. His Government fully supported such planning, provided that account was taken of the special circumstances of the country, which was forced to develop in a situation marked by rapid degradation of its natural resources owing to repeated droughts and human activity. Under those circumstances, the public authorities and the private sector had taken initiatives to protect the environment and promote sustainable development.

35. His Government, mindful that social and ecological balances facilitated the sustainable development of agricultural and forestry activities, focused its environmental policy on the following three areas: combating desertification, sustainable and rational management of forest resources, and environmental conservation. The private sector and, in particular, non-governmental organizations and environmental groups, participated actively and directly in the country's development. Over 100 non-governmental organizations, grouped into associations, participated in nearly all development sectors. A number of mechanisms had been instituted to promote coordination between those organizations and government agencies with a view to better harmonizing views and providing proper guidance on development measures for the benefit of the population.

36. The efforts of the international community to cope with environmental degradation were encouraging; accordingly, the multiple activities of the United Nations and system organizations to promote development and global environmental protection must be supported. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the implementation of paragraph 5 (b) of General Assembly resolution 54/217, which called upon the secretariats of the various environmental conventions to strengthen cooperation with a view to facilitating the implementation of those conventions at the international, regional and national levels. Indeed, the battle for the environment must be based on an integrated strategy, whether it was a question of desertification, the loss of biological diversity or even climate change, since the urgency was the same, and no preference should be given to any of those areas. To that end, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) should continue to play a fundamental role in solving global environmental problems, affording equitable treatment to the implementation of the various conventions emanating from the Rio Summit.

37. His delegation believed that the recommendations and suggestions made by the Commission on Sustainable Development with a view to the holding of Rio+10 were pertinent and merited special attention. Rio+10 should not renegotiate Agenda 21; rather, it should be the framework for reviewing the achievements made over the past 10 years and adopting new measures for implementing the commitments made at the Rio Summit.

38. **Mr. Lomba** (Gabon) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had served to improve the protection and management of ecosystems and to ensure a safer and more prosperous future for all.

39. The Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 reflected the firm determination of the international community to deal with common concerns. At Rio+10, States should assess the progress made in implementing those instruments, bearing in mind also that to facilitate their implementation was to promote sustainable development, the basic goal of United Nations activities in the social, economic and environmental fields.

40. His delegation supported the concrete initiatives under GEF and other, related ones, aimed at reducing the adverse impact of human activities on the environment by contributing to the following areas: the financing of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; assistance to Western European, Eastern European and Central Asian States in phasing out the use of chemical products that were depleting the ozone layer, which use had, as stated in the GEF report, decreased by 90 per cent in 1997; reducing greenhouse gas emissions, discouraging the use of technologies harmful to the climate and encouraging the exploitation of low-cost substitute energy sources, such as wind and solar energy; the financing of

sustainable water resource management activities throughout the world, seeking to deal simultaneously with environmental problems affecting seas and freshwater masses; promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development, taking into account the need to conserve biological diversity and production areas and granting microcredit loans, particularly to women; promoting sustainable development in the passenger and cargo transport sector, opting for the most effective and least contaminating means; conservation of biological diversity, creating and strengthening protected areas and offering other means of livelihood to populations situated in the vicinity of major habitats.

41. In order to enhance their effectiveness, such measures should be extended to all countries and their basic objectives should be reducing poverty; guaranteeing a means of subsistence, health and quality of life; improving women's social and legal status and income; and ensuring education and training for all and the empowerment of the indigenous populations and the local communities.

42. Developing countries continued to need help in elaborating and applying effective laws, establishing judicial procedures, complying with international agreements and training their own experts in environmental law. Strategies must be elaborated to mitigate the adverse environmental impact of human activities, taking into account the specific economic, ecological, geographical and cultural characteristics of each country. Moreover, Gabon and other Central African countries, whose economies were based almost exclusively on the primary sector, in other words, forestry, mining and agricultural production, could not on their own assume the financial and technical burdens associated with the implementation of Agenda 21, particularly when they had to shoulder a heavy debt and debt-serving burden.

43. Gabon actively participated in the implementation of a number of subregional programmes and projects, such as the regional environment information management programme, the Central African regional environmental programme, the Summit of Central African Heads of State on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests and the project to establish a trust fund for the sustainable management and conservation of the forest ecosystems of Central Africa.

44. His delegation appealed to the international community to increase its assistance in order to support actively the establishment of the trust fund in the spirit of resolution 54/214. It also welcomed the consensus achieved in the informal consultations on forests, held in September 2000, and hoped that the United Nations Forum on Forests would adopt a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework.

45. It was worrying that the necessary financial resources for activities under the Convention to Combat Desertification were still lacking. Gabon supported the draft resolution declaring 2002 the "International Year of Mountains".

46. Eight years after the Rio de Janeiro Conference, the efforts of developing countries had not received the proper support, particularly with respect to financial resources, the transfer of environmentally friendly sound technologies, trade liberalization and capacity-building. Countries could not effectively protect the environment if they did not have the necessary means to upgrade their living conditions. Therefore, today, more than ever, a greater degree of international cooperation and solidarity was necessary. In that connection, the High-level Event on Financing for Development and the Conference on the Least Developed Countries should contribute to the preparations for the ten-year review, taking into account the priorities outlined in Agenda 21 and the new challenges posed by globalization. Gabon hoped that civil society, particularly that of developing countries, would participate actively in such work and welcomed the recommendation formulated by the Commission on Sustainable Development with regard to the establishment of a special fund to finance the participation of developing countries in both the preparatory process and the 2002 event. It also hoped that the ten-year review would help to translate the commitments undertaken into reality.

47. **Mr. Al-Riyami** (Oman) expressed support for the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that, despite the time that had elapsed since the convening of the Rio Conference, the industrialized countries had not taken the necessary preventive measures to forestall global environmental deterioration. Clearly, those countries had not modified their unsustainable patterns of production or consumption, nor were they interested in eliminating environmentally harmful pollutant gases. A dialogue and cooperation between

technology-possessing countries and developing countries should be launched in order to arrive at acceptable solutions that would help bring pollution to an end. Assistance must also be provided to developing countries in order to enable them to acquire environmentally friendly technologies. The preparatory process for the ten-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21 would offer an exceptional opportunity to consider the means and mechanisms for taking the necessary initiatives for the full implementation of the programme of action.

48. There was a widening gap between the developed and developing countries, aggravated by the economic and social pressures of globalization and the terrible problems caused by environmental deterioration. In order to narrow that gap, national and international efforts must be redoubled, and effective international cooperation must be established, particularly with regard to financing for the transfer of technology, debt relief and more favourable terms of trade. Oman urged the developed countries to fulfil their commitments to provide international assistance in order to stimulate the flow of additional resources to developing countries and meet the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to assistance for those countries.

49. The Sultanate's efforts to protect the environment had been recognized by the international community, particularly UNEP. The establishment of a biannual prize, The Sultan Qabus Prize for nature conservation, was the finest example of the Sultanate's eagerness to protect the environment and, in particular, the marine environment.

50. As the majority of oil tankers crossing the Gulf hugged the coasts of Oman, the competent authorities of the Sultanate were striving to implement the recommendations of the conference on the prohibition of oil spills and protection of the marine environment, held in 1995 at its invitation. It was to be hoped that the other countries of the region would do likewise in order to protect the marine environment in the zone.

51. With regard to the problem of chemical products and toxic waste, his Government had approved a series of laws to regulate the import, export and transport of and trade in those materials, and had established a standing committee which maintained contacts with the relevant international bodies. He paid a tribute to the work done by his colleagues in that area and called on countries with the necessary technical and scientific capacity to assist the developing countries in developing and implementing projects, drafting legislation, gathering information on environmental problems and strengthening their capacity to deal with them. His delegation hoped that the objectives established to benefit mankind as a whole would be achieved through the concerted efforts of Member States to ensure optimal use of natural resources in the interest of sustainable development.

52. **Mr. Lukwiya** (Uganda) said that the Rio commitment to forge an agenda to protect the world environment was the most significant initiative taken by world leaders in the quest for sustainable development. By recognizing the linkage between poverty and poverty eradication and the changing pattern of production and consumption on the one hand and the sustainable use of resources and the protection of the environment on the other, Agenda 21 had laid down a basic precondition for peace and collective human security in the global economic order for the twenty-first century.

53. The unprecedented degradation and in some cases destruction of the ability of the environment to provide the much-needed life-sustaining systems of mankind were the greatest challenge to be faced in the twenty-first century. The economic and social consequences of climate change were increasingly catastrophic. Renewed calls for urgent action for the implementation of Agenda 21 were therefore entirely justifiable. The goal must be to meet the economic needs of the present without compromising the ability of the planet to provide for the needs of future generations.

54. In anticipation of the 10-year review, it was logical to measure the progress made since 1992 towards implementation of Agenda 21. Environmental sustainability was the responsibility of all, but much too little had been achieved thus far. The internationally agreed objectives and targets were not being implemented within the agreed time frame and, as a result of the lack of commitment from the international community, sufficient resources were not being mobilized for the execution of sustainable development projects. He nevertheless recognized the contribution made by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank in replenishing the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and welcomed the efforts of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development to coordinate action in many areas in preparation for the review.

55. At the national level, his Government had established a national environment action plan under the supervision of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). The plan laid down a clear policy framework for addressing environmental concerns in accordance with the agreed objectives of Agenda 21. Financial constraints, however, had remained a major impediment to meeting the country's most pressing environmental problems, for which assistance was urgently needed.

56. The year 2000 had been a defining moment for efforts to ensure that the environmental degradation which threatened the planet's sustainability was arrested and reversed. International cooperation must therefore be reinforced in a spirit of international partnership and solidarity. The necessary collective capacity to achieve sustainable development did exist; nevertheless, a higher level of political commitment was needed and urgent measures must be adopted to fully support implementation of the environment-related legal instruments already in force. That was what was needed to save the planet from gradual destruction.

The meeting was suspended at 4.26 p.m. and resumed at 4:30 p.m.

Agenda item 95: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/55/95, A/55/99-E/2000/86 and A/55/357)

(b) Convention on Biological Diversity (A/55/211)

(c) Water supply and sanitation (A/55/65-E/2000/19)

(d) Further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/55/185 and A/C.2/55/3)

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/55/331)

(f) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (A/55/91)

57. **Mr. Diallo** (Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/55/331), prepared in response to the request made in General Assembly resolution 54/223. The third session of the Conference of the Parties to that Convention had been held in Recife, Brazil, from 15 to 26 November 1999 and the Parties had adopted 23 important decisions which provided further policy guidance on how best to continue facilitating the implementation process of the Convention, including the programme and budget for the 2000-2001 biennium, the medium-term strategy of the Secretariat, the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international bodies and the programme of work of the Committee on Science and Technology.

58. During the period covered in the report, priority had been given to facilitating the action programmes underpinning the implementation processes at the national, subregional and regional levels. The secretariat had also strengthened cooperation and coordination with the activities of other relevant conventions and the competent specialized agencies. Awareness-raising and outreach activities had been intensified. As a result, 10 additional countries had ratified or acceded to the Convention, bringing the total number of Parties to 169. On 18 October 2000 the United States Senate had unanimously approved ratification of the Convention, reaffirming once again its universal dimension. He invited countries which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention.

59. Preparations were now under way for the holding of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties from 11 to 22 December 2000 in Bonn, Germany. The Conference would be examining the reports on implementation of the Convention prepared by affected countries from regions other than Africa. The Secretariat had assisted affected developing country Parties during the preparation of their national reports through the organization of briefing sessions and workshops and the provision of financial and technical support to increase the capacity of the national coordinating bodies.

60. As of 30 June 2000, 30 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean had submitted their national reports, as had 32 from Asia and 5 from Central and Eastern Europe. That brought the total

number of reports, including those submitted by the Northern Mediterranean affected countries, the international organizations and the African countries, to 120. It was therefore expected that the Parties would not only agree at the Conference on the most appropriate way of reviewing and analysing in depth the reports submitted, but would also take decisions on the further implementation of the Convention and on various issues such as the initiative towards a declaration of commitments to enhance the implementation of the Convention, the additional regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern Europe and activities pertaining to the mandate of the Committee on Science and Technology.

61. In conformity with General Assembly resolution 52/198, the Convention secretariat had prepared for consideration by the Conference a report on the functioning of the institutional linkage between the Convention secretariat and the United Nations and would inform the General Assembly in due course of the decisions taken by the Conference on that matter and on all the issues mentioned earlier. The review of the implementation of the Convention by affected countries and their development partners had revealed serious challenges that needed to be addressed in order to achieve tangible results. Affected countries had underlined the importance of the Convention as a development tool. It was important for the General Assembly to know about the challenges those countries were facing. The real concern was how to effect the necessary partnership in order to accompany the efforts of the affected countries, and the priority was to address fundamental issues such as the strengthening of capacities in affected countries, particularly the poorest among them.

62. A noteworthy development was the emergence of a new but indubitably firm movement of systemic response to implementation of the Convention by key partners. An example was the recent decision 2000/23 adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) calling for a strengthening of the partnership for drylands development and giving a clear mandate to UNDP to strengthen its support to affected developing countries, particularly for capacity-building and resources mobilization. There was also evidence of promising moves in financing institutions such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other regional banks. Also noteworthy was the invaluable role that affected countries attached to South-South cooperation. In that regard, the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund had in the previous two years been supporting a number of projects aimed at mitigating drought and combating desertification in affected regions, and he trusted that other multilateral and bilateral partners would follow suit. In conclusion, he thanked all development partners who had contributed to the activities of the Convention secretariat.

63. **Mr. Zedan** (Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity), introducing his report (A/55/211), said that work under the Convention on Biological Diversity had focused on the finalization of the negotiations for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and on the preparations for, convening of and follow-up to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which had been held in Nairobi in May.

64. The report contained a brief description of those activities and of the main outcomes of the Conference of the Parties, and also the response by the Convention secretariat to the General Assembly's invitation in paragraph 11 (e) of resolution 54/218 to provide a report on how the activities of the Convention contributed to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.

65. In the previous year, the Convention process had moved forward on a number of fronts, both operational and institutional. A significant development had been the adoption in January of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, after long and difficult negotiations; the successful outcome was due to the determination of all those involved and the persistence and vision of the President of the extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties. To date, 74 States and the European Community had signed the Protocol, and he urged all States that had not yet done so to sign and ratify the Protocol at the earliest opportunity in order to accelerate its entry into force.

66. The Protocol was a landmark achievement inasmuch as it was the first legally binding international instrument that explicitly included the precautionary approach. It was also a highly technical treaty, whose implementation would require extensive capacity-building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. A basic mechanism for the implementation of the Protocol would be the Biosafety Clearing House. The Conference of the

Parties had underscored the need to launch the Clearing House no later than the date of entry into force of the Protocol.

67. Work towards that objective included the holding, the previous month, of a meeting of technical experts on the Biosafety Clearing House which had considered such issues as the needs of Parties, system design, development of operational procedures and the possibility of partnerships with existing information systems. Its conclusions would be put before the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol, to be held in Montpellier, France, in December, which would focus on the priority areas that would need to be addressed by the first meeting of the Parties, in particular capacity-building and information sharing.

68. The results of the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which had been marked by a business-like approach and a spirit of consensus, were summarized in section III. There had been a shift in focus from policy-setting to implementation, with progress being made on both the thematic and cross-cutting programmes of work. A number of key concepts had been established, including the ecosystem approach. Progress had also been made with respect to indigenous and traditional knowledge and access and benefit-sharing. Moreover, interim guiding principles had been established for addressing the problems posed by invasive alien species, which would be considered at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in The Hague in 2002, and at the next meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. Preparations for the sixth meeting of the Subsidiary Body had already begun with the convening of a number of liaison groups to provide expert advice on such matters as invasive alien species, forest biological diversity and coral reefs. The second meeting of the Panel of Experts on Access and Benefit-Sharing, a difficult but vital area for the Convention, would also be held.

69. The Convention secretariat had continued to cooperate with other organizations and environmental conventions. A programme of work on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands had been developed with the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification and it was planned to continue such collaboration through the development of a joint work plan along the lines of the one that had been jointly prepared with the Convention on Wetlands. Likewise, a programme of work on agricultural biodiversity, developed in close collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), had been adopted. Efforts were also being made to establish closer cooperation with the Convention on Climate Change in a number of areas such as forestry, incentive measures, dry and sub-humid lands and coral reefs. A memorandum of cooperation had also been concluded with the Coordination Office for the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities. The purpose of the memorandum was to ensure harmonization of implementation activities at the national, regional and global levels, particularly with respect to the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity with measures to prevent and reduce physical alterations and habitat destruction from land-based activities. That spirit of cooperation would also be a feature of the Global Initiative on Biological Diversity Education and Public Awareness, to be undertaken with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Union for the Conservation of Natural Resources (IUCN).

70. The fact that public awareness of biological diversity was still lagging far behind other major environmental issues made it all the more urgent to implement the Initiative, since the loss of biological diversity eroded the underpinnings of sustainable development, increased the damage caused by natural disasters and intensified the spiral of poverty. In relation to that Initiative, the Conference of the Parties was proposing that the International Day for Biological Diversity should be observed on 22 May, which would allow for synergies to be developed with the preparations for World Environment Day, which fell on 5 June.

71. As section V of the report showed, the activities of the Convention were closely intertwined with the implementation of Agenda 21. The Cartagena Protocol was a striking illustration, as it not only enshrined the precautionary approach, but also sought to achieve the objective of chapter 16 of Agenda 21 by attempting to maximize the benefits while minimizing the potential risks of biotechnology. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity would give its fullest support to the preparatory activities for the 10-year review of progress achieved in the implementation

of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and report to the Commission on Sustainable Development on progress made in the implementation of the Convention.

72. **Ms. DiSano** (Director of the Division for Sustainable Development) introduced the report entitled "Progress made in providing water supply and sanitation for all during the 1990s" (A/55/65-E/2000/19), which had already been considered by the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council. While access to water supply in the rural areas of Africa had increased from 37 per cent to 46 per cent over the previous decade, the majority of the people living in those areas still lacked access to a reasonable supply of water, which was unacceptable in terms of human health and well-being. Even less progress had been achieved in the rural areas of Latin America and the Caribbean, since the population with access to water supply had only increased from 56 to 58 per cent. The provision of services to the neglected rural population remained a formidable challenge that needed to be addressed with the utmost urgency. The goal of achieving full coverage in the next 25 years could only be envisaged if Governments, the international community, non-governmental organizations and civil society at large took concrete and decisive steps to implement fully the recommendations of Agenda 21 and other international conferences on the subject.

73. She introduced the report on the implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/55/185) and noted the activities carried out under the Barbados Programme of Action by the United Nations system, other intergovernmental regional bodies and a number of Governments at the national level in the areas of climate change and sea level rise; natural and environmental disasters; waste management; coastal and marine resources; freshwater, land, energy, tourism and biodiversity resources; national institutions and administrative capacity; transport and communications; human resources development; social and cultural development; trade; and development of a vulnerability index, which was of particular importance. The United Nations had focused most of its efforts with respect to the implementation of the Programme of Action on capacity-building, human resources development and the development of a vulnerability index.

74. Introducing the report on the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (A/55/91), she took note of the General Assembly's objective, namely, to ensure that the Programme was fully integrated into the efforts of the United Nations system to attain sustainable development. Some 2 billion people had no access to commercial energy, which meant that nearly 35 per cent of the world's population had inadequate energy for cooking, lighting, heating or air conditioning their homes, clinics, schools, community centres and so on, a situation that harmed the development process. Renewable energy programmes, including the World Solar Programme, could contribute to solving the energy problems of rural areas and the urban poor and thereby improve the quality of life in such areas. A number of countries had taken action to promote the use of renewable energy sources in line with the recommendations contained in the Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development. That demonstrated that there was an increasing interest worldwide in the use of renewable energy sources and that progress had been achieved at all levels in the implementation of projects and programmes in that area, including those of the World Solar Programme.

75. **Mr. Anaedu** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity was a milestone in the establishment of a regulatory framework for the conservation of biological diversity, specifically in relation to the transboundary movement of living modified organisms that could have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. While the objectives of the Protocol were laudable, its effective implementation would depend on the international community providing the financial mechanism necessary for the Protocol to achieve its objectives. States parties must focus on the adequate functioning of the biosafety clearing house, establish a regionally balanced roster of experts nominated by governments in fields relevant to risk assessment and risk management, ensure that the Executive Secretary of the Convention found a way of obtaining resources to enable developing countries to make use of the experts, and promote ratification of the Protocol; his Government had already taken the latter step. Priority must be given to developing countries in the transfer of environmentally sound technology, the exchange of information and the financing of the implementation of the information-exchange mechanism.

In that context, the role of GEF in funding the relevant activities, particularly in developing countries, was essential to the universal and effective application of the Convention.

76. Another issue of special importance was the implementation of article 14 of the Convention, on liability. The principle embodied in the Convention of the operator's liability for clearing pollution and paying compensation for damage to the environment should not be undermined by procedural complexities. It was of the greatest importance that the elaboration of international rules and procedures concerning liability and compensation for damage resulting from transboundary movements of living modified organisms should be completed as soon as possible.

77. Other aspects of the Convention that should not be forgotten were the participation of indigenous and local communities in its implementation and the adoption of measures to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of the benefits that public and private institutions obtained from the application of those communities' knowledge, innovations and practices.

78. The Group of 77 was concerned at the limited progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. That was due mainly to the lack of financial assistance from the international community, particularly from GEF. It was essential to expand GEF to accommodate programmes under the Convention. An example of the lack of assistance to developing countries was the scant support received by the 43 African countries that had submitted their national reports, although the Convention secretariat was to be commended for its efforts to raise the scant funds available for that task. The resources allocated under the trust fund of the secretariat for the preparation of national, subregional and regional reports from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean had diminished, making it still more urgent to provide States parties with the same tools available under other conventions to enable them to meet their obligations.

79. The Group would therefore make concrete proposals for the long-term financing of the Convention through the establishment of a funding mechanism and, where that was not possible, through expansion of the mandate of GEF to accommodate activities under the Convention. While the efforts of the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP to provide assistance to the secretariat of the Convention were commendable, they were not sufficient to sustain its implementation. Accordingly, the Group would also request the Secretary-General to make provision for the cost of servicing the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2003.

80. Water was a vital resource on which life and the world ecosystem depended. Agenda 21 addressed the issues relating to water with a view to furthering international cooperation and assisting countries in providing clean drinking water and adequate sanitation services for their population. That would, of course, require major investment; accordingly, the Group of 77 wished to use the momentum generated by the Millennium Summit to call upon developed countries to provide the technical assistance and resources required to achieve those objectives. In that connection, the Group of 77 supported the designation of 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater.

81. The twenty-second special session of the General Assembly on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had shown that the Barbados Programme of Action, which had failed to address the high degree of vulnerability occasioned by global climate change had not been fully implemented. The impact of frequent floods, hurricanes, drought and natural disasters had left the small island developing States helpless. The Group of 77 and China called for concerted international action to support those countries' efforts to implement the Programme of Action in the areas of capacity-building, resource mobilization, finance, transfer of environmentally sound technology, external debt obligations, poverty eradication and reduction of the effects of natural disasters.

82. The promotion of new and renewable sources of energy would require the active, cooperative involvement of the relevant stakeholders, including governments, concerned units of the United Nations system, multilateral funding agencies and the private sector and research into and development of renewable sources of energy, particularly in developing countries. In that connection, the Group of 77 and China commended the work of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Renewable Energy Education and Training Programme and, in particular, its energy services to

rural and isolated populations. That programme should continue to focus on new technologies, especially with respect to the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005.

83. The critical energy development issues on which developing countries required urgent attention included capacity-building in human resources development; local industrial capacity for solar energy technologies; transfer of technology in the energy and energy-related sector, particularly the elimination of barriers to the transfer of technology; access to financial resources, including official development assistance (ODA); and private investment flows into the energy infrastructure and related services.

84. The Millennium Declaration had stressed that no effort must be spared to free all humanity and, above all, future generations, from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably damaged by the impact of human activities, and whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs. The various programmes and conventions that had been concluded were part of the effort to achieve that goal. The Committee's deliberations and decisions would help the international community to meet the various challenges that faced humankind by adopting action-oriented measures and effectively including participation of developing countries.

85. It was also important to bring the programme of work of the United Nations General Assembly to the attention of the secretariats of the various conventions on the environment in order to ensure that their meetings did not coincide with those of the Assembly and to facilitate the participation of experienced delegations, particularly from developing States, in the work of the conferences of States parties.

86. **Mr. Bossière** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and the other associated countries (Cyprus, Malta and Turkey) strongly supported the statement that he was making on biological diversity, small island developing States, combating desertification and new sources of energy.

87. With respect to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the negotiation process launched in 1995 had led to the adoption on 29 January 2000 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which should make it possible to control transboundary movements of genetically modified organisms whose dissemination could be harmful to the environment. The European Union welcomed the success of negotiations in that vitally important area and called upon all its partners to sign and ratify the Protocol in the near future in order to expedite its entry into force. It also hoped that the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol, to be held in Montpellier from 11 to 15 December 2000, would lead to concrete progress in the creation of a mechanism to facilitate international cooperation for biosafety. The European Union welcomed the results of the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nairobi in May 2000, particularly with regard to access to genetic resources and protection of the practices and knowledge of indigenous peoples.

88. With regard to small island developing States, everyone agreed that six years after the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, much remained to be done to promote the sustainable development of those States. They faced major challenges such as protection of their marine environment from various types of pollution, scarcity of fresh water, increase in the frequency and severity of natural disasters, adaptation to climate change and rising sea level, integration into the global economy and diversification of their exports. The European Union remained determined to support the efforts of small island developing States in the priority areas of action established in Barbados and in the documents adopted at the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in September 1999. It also welcomed the decision of the Economic and Social Council, on the recommendation of the Committee for Development Policy, to replace the economic diversification index by an economic vulnerability index as a criterion for identification of the least developed countries, which would imply an explicit recognition of vulnerability, a key issue for small island States.

89. With regard to efforts to combat desertification, the European Union attached particular importance to the Convention to Combat Desertification, which combined an environmental approach and development-related concerns. The most recent Conference of the

Parties, held in Recife in November 1999, had helped to define more clearly the capacities and spheres of intervention of the various organs set up under the Convention. The fourth Conference of the Parties, to be held in Bonn from 11 to 22 December 2000, must confirm that positive trend in the implementation of a Convention whose purpose was to develop complementarities and synergies among the various initiatives and programmes to combat desertification.

90. With regard to new sources of energy, the European Union believed that the current system of energy production, distribution and use did not fully meet the criteria for sustainable development. In keeping with the provisions of Agenda 21, it supported the even greater use of new and renewable energy sources in all sectors of consumption, including both grid systems and decentralized systems, and urged study of the untapped potential of new energy sources such as solar and wind energy in rural areas. It proposed that transfers of technology and of technical know-how on new energy sources to the developing countries should be increased. In that regard, it awaited with interest the conclusions of the working group established by the Group of Eight countries to look at issues related to renewable energy. The European Union supported, wherever possible, the use of the latest technologies in developing countries.

91. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said that the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was another historic step in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, showing that, given political will, it was possible to unite commercial and environmental interests. The Protocol put the precautionary principle into effect and entailed important rights and commitments for both importing and exporting countries. The operational details of the Protocol must be defined as a matter of urgency and, in that regard, he emphasized the importance of the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol, to be held in Montpellier, France, in December 2000.

92. The fifth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity had proved to be a useful forum for strategic discussions with respect to the further implementation of the Convention. The clearing-house mechanism would be a particularly important part of the Convention machinery. The dialogue between scientists and policy makers in that connection, needed to be improved. The establishment of a comprehensive scientific assessment mechanism could be a useful next step that would facilitate independent scientific and technical work. Among the positive developments already achieved, his delegation welcomed the new work programme on biodiversity in agriculture and believed that sustainable use and cross-sectoral coordination would be key concepts in the work that lay ahead.

93. The international community was faced with many urgent water problems. Growing water scarcity was leading to increased competition for water in many parts of the world, and that particularly affected the poor. One of the main priorities of Norway's development cooperation policy was therefore to help facilitate access to clean water and sustainable sanitation. Water scarcity could also be an important factor in conflicts between States and peoples. His delegation supported cooperative efforts to address the issue of shared water resources, inter alia, in the Middle East, the Nile basin, southern Africa and the Mekong area, since sound water resources management was a key to peace and sustainable development. Resolving transboundary water issues required dedicated, long-term commitment on the part of riparian States and donors, as well as integration and cooperation between national and international agencies with a view to ensuring efficient water use and coherent water management policies. Cooperation and coordination must continue to be promoted within existing mechanisms, particularly the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, regional bodies and bodies established under intergovernmental treaties, in order to strengthen water-related policies and programmes to enhance water security.

94. The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States provided a comprehensive basis for sustainable development in accordance with Agenda 21 and the Conventions adopted in Rio. While much had been done by the small island developing States themselves, much remained to be done and further efforts at the international level were needed to assist them. His delegation recognized the special situation which small island developing States were facing with regard to their vulnerability to climate change and the need for sustainable management of marine resources and energy supplies. Although they made practically no contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, they were likely to suffer the most as a result of climate change

and a rise in sea levels. Their particular vulnerability made it urgent to deal effectively with climate change. His Government was supporting their efforts to implement the Barbados Programme of Action through a number of initiatives, and he underlined the importance which his delegation attached to continued close collaboration with the Alliance of Small Island States.

95. Degradation of productive land was a serious problem for the international community. Together with food insecurity, it reinforced poverty, which was often the result of a lack of power and of control over resources. The participatory approach outlined in the Convention to Combat Desertification was therefore essential. At the same time, the poorest and most severely affected countries, particularly in Africa, continued to need substantial international assistance in order to combat desertification. The Convention must therefore be followed up as a matter of urgency. His Government allocated more than 50 per cent of its bilateral assistance and a substantial part of its multilateral assistance to sub-Saharan Africa and would maintain that level of assistance.

96. **Mr. Baquero** (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said, with reference to technology transfer, that the Rio Group reaffirmed the imperative need to use environmentally sound technologies and develop sustainable production systems. The countries of the Group were working to strengthen scientific and technological capacities and promoting practical initiatives for international cooperation, including those which facilitated technology transfer.

97. The Rio Group recognized that growth in trade and environmental conservation were complementary objectives in achieving sustainable development. That meant rejecting the adoption of unilateral measures which, under the guise of protecting the environment, imposed unjustified restrictions on trade. Also to be opposed was the adoption of arbitrary and unilateral measures contrary to the multilateral trade system that were based on labour considerations and restricted access by the products of the countries in the Group to other markets.

98. With regard to climate change the Rio Group called upon developed countries to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol by 2002. Commitments under the Buenos Aires Plan of Action must be honoured; in particular, the arrangements must be made as soon as possible to implement the mechanisms provided for in the Kyoto Protocol, especially the clean development mechanism and the flexibility mechanisms under the Protocol. Such regulation should cover all the provisions of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and any attempts to the contrary should be opposed. The Rio Group wished to contribute to the success of the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and to work, in cooperation with others, towards a successful outcome.

99. A worrying development was recent scientific evidence of unprecedented growth in the size of the hole in the ozone layer over the Antarctic, which, for the first time, was affecting urban centres in South America. The Group called upon States to take the necessary steps to implement fully the Montreal Protocol, especially with regard to substances that depleted the ozone layer, and to provide adequate resources to the Multilateral Fund provided for under the Protocol, intended to support the most vulnerable countries.

100. The Rio Group welcomed the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and invited all countries that had not yet done so to accede to that instrument so that it could enter into force as soon as possible. International cooperation for capacity-building was needed to ensure implementation of the Cartagena Protocol by the developing countries.

101. The Rio Group welcomed the approval by the Economic and Social Council of the establishment of the United Nations Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, a mechanism that would be beneficial for the conservation and utilization of all types of forestry resources.

102. The Rio Group was seriously concerned about the limited resources assigned to the region under the financial mechanism of the Convention to Combat Desertification, particularly as it was the most important agreement reached in Rio de Janeiro, yet was receiving the least international support. He stressed the importance of support for the objectives of the Convention and approval of programmes to implement it in the region.

103. The Rio Group supported the draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77 and China to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon and to set up the

international centre for the study of the El Niño phenomenon in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and appealed to the international community to provide support for the realization of that project. The Rio Group endorsed the activities of the UNESCO World Solar Programme and likewise requested the international community to provide its support.

104. It was of paramount importance to strengthen international cooperation in all its forms in order to achieve genuine sustainable development, since the problems of development and their relationship with environmental issues required concerted action on the part of the international community as a whole. The United Nations, its agencies, funds and programmes, the various intergovernmental bodies and civil society were called upon to play a decisive role in preserving the environment and promoting sustainable development.

105. **Ms. Cuevas** (Guatemala) said that her delegation associated itself with the statements made by Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Colombia, on behalf of the Rio Group. It should be stressed, however, that Guatemala was a country with an abundant wealth and variety of natural resources that were being threatened by growing demographic pressure. Moreover, it was one of the countries with the highest stable rural population rates in Latin America, with a high proportion of indigenous people (48 per cent of the total) and a significant share of national income deriving from agriculture. A population both rural and indigenous resulted in high overall fertility rates. In the past decade there had been significant internal migratory movements to rural areas, leading to the occupation of areas with vulnerable forest ecosystems and land that was not suited to agriculture.

106. In its efforts to achieve sustainable development, the Government had taken the following measures: first, the incorporation, as a matter of priority, of environmental conservation and improvement and sustainable use of natural resources into economic policy through the introduction of incentives, mechanisms for financing and the promotion of investments and technology transfer; second, the institutional and legal harmonization of a strategy for the conservation and sustainable management of water resources; and, third, the involvement of civil society in the consultation and decision-making processes.

107. The Peace Agreements signed in 1996 had ended the internal armed conflict and led to a number of economic and social reforms in Guatemala, including reforms relating to the State, taxes, land use, and the most comprehensive agreement signed to date to promote the rights and the culture of the indigenous peoples. Taken together, those reforms constituted a national commitment to sustainable development.

108. At the regional level, Central America had a long history of integration in the sphere of the environment. Examples were the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development, the Convention on Forests, and the Action Plan for Integrated Water Management in the Central American Isthmus. Mesoamerica possessed 10 per cent of the world's biological diversity, and it was implementing the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project under which eight countries were cooperating to protect their ecosystems and improve the quality of life of their inhabitants. The corridor covered 750,000 square kilometres and 40 million inhabitants. Within it, numerous national programmes were being combined into a single regional programme.

109. At the Rio Conference, the traditional approach to the environment had changed, and the United Nations system had been assigned a fundamental role in environmental conservation. Guatemala, for its part, reiterated the commitments made in 1992 and updated in 1997, and was prepared to participate actively in the preparatory process for the ten-year review.

110. **Mr. Ibrahim** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Referring to agenda item 95 (e), on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, he said that the deterioration of arid zones and the problem of desertification were a phenomenon with extraordinary dimensions which threatened the well-being of millions of people throughout the world, particularly in Africa. The problems of desertification and drought were compounded by poverty and the absence of the natural and financial resources needed to achieve sustainable development. Desertification resulted from the application of unplanned measures, lack of awareness about the environment, the absence of rational policies for the management of resources, the use of faulty agricultural methods, and an unplanned demographic policy. Desertification and drought, in turn, gave rise to internal displacement and refugee flows to neighbouring countries, which placed enormous

pressures on the resources of those countries and hindered their development efforts. The situation could be remedied only by implementing integrated economic and social development policies and plans which would ensure an equitable distribution of wealth, with the participation of all members of society, particularly those who were marginalized at the economic, social, environmental and cultural levels. To that end, combined efforts must be made at the national and regional levels, and the international community must increase its technical and financial cooperation.

111. The high cost of the rehabilitation of land, equipment and means of production, along with the conditions imposed by the rich countries in the area of human rights on the basis of their own norms and experiences, and the blocking of the transfer of technology, had hindered the efforts of the African countries to fulfil their national plans, including those designed to mitigate desertification and the consequences of drought. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, like other countries of the continent, was afflicted with the problems of desertification and drought. Much of its land was arid, and almost 95 per cent of its inhabitants lived in an area which included less than 5 per cent arable land, which was also threatened by the desert. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had ratified the Convention in 1996 and was making enormous efforts to control desertification. In that respect, mention should be made of a major project to combat desertification and drought which involved the construction of huge artificial rivers, notwithstanding the technical embargo imposed on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and its assets. Once completed, the project would make it possible to transfer approximately 6 million cubic metres of water a day through a network of aqueducts 4 meters wide and over 5,000 kilometres long.

112. A strategy should be established that took into account the right of the developing countries to implement development plans whereby the developed countries guaranteed assistance for the control of desertification and drought, especially considering that those phenomena derived from the practices of those same countries. The developed countries should therefore take responsibility by participating in the elimination of the consequences of those practices. In that respect, it was important that the States Members of the Organization, particularly the developing countries, should make joint efforts in the following areas: first, intensification of research studies on the desalinization of water in order to improve desalinization methods, as well as studies to produce crops that were more resistant to drought, salinity and desertification, and implementation of international projects for sowing those crops in the vicinity of desert areas in order to protect the limited coverage of vegetation which remained in those areas, halt its deterioration and at least partially restore it; second, transfer of modern technology at reasonable prices to protect resources and ensure better management, for example, by contributing to the installation of pumps run on solar or wind power so as to develop those sources of energy in the desert; third, contribution to carrying out international geological studies using modern techniques such as remote sensing from artificial satellites or traditional methods to find new sources of water at the regional level, since local studies were generally inadequate; and fourth, assistance in mine clearance by providing equipment for the detection and removal of mines so as to be able to farm those arid areas after clearing them of mines.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.